

**PRINCIPALS' CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AS
CORRELATES OF TEACHERS JOB EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE**

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Abstract

The study investigated principals' conflict management strategies as correlates of teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted the correlation research design and the study was carried out in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised 263 principals of public secondary schools in Anambra State. Two instruments were used to collect data for the study. The instruments were validated by three experts in the Department of Educational Management and Policy, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Test of reliability on the instrument yielded coefficient values of 0.88 for accommodating conflict management strategies, 0.86 for collaborating conflict management strategies and 0.87 for teachers' effectiveness. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer research questions. Finding of the study revealed that there is a very high positive relationship between principals' use of accommodation strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Finding of the study also revealed that there is a very high positive relationship between principals' use of collaboration strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. Based on these findings, the researchers recommended that principals in public secondary

schools should utilize the accommodation strategy of conflict management when handling conflict situations in their school. It was also recommended that principals' of public secondary schools should educate themselves on best practices in the utilization of collaboration strategy in handling conflicts in their schools through reading of books and journals on conflict management.

Keywords: Principals, Conflict Management, Strategies, Teachers, Job Effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

The school is a social organization that requires the cooperation and interactions of individuals and groups to achieve the school goals. The school as a microcosm of society brings together different views of the world, different ways of being, thinking and living, thus becoming a space for representing social differences and being a place where different conflicts occur daily. In these interactions messages are passed from one person to another and feedback is gotten on messages received. However, once in a while disruptions occur in the communication process which results to conflict.

Like other institutions, schools are not exempt from conflict. Student/student conflict, student/staff conflict, staff/staff conflict, principal/staff conflict, and school/community conflict all result from interactions between members of the school organization (students, staff, management, and the community) as they work to achieve the organization's goals and objectives. Conflict is a mutual interference of parts, actions and reactions in a social system. Conflict is a process in which one party perceives that its interest is being opposed or negatively affected by another party (Ugwu, Emegini, Okeke-James, Igbokwe & Okparaji, 2020). Similarly, Amie-Ogan and Eziri (2021) defined conflict as any divergence of interest, objectives or priorities between individuals, groups or organizations or non-conformity to requirement of a task, activity or process. Amoda, Awe, Ogunade and Yaakubu (2021) defined conflict as:

As the behaviour of an individual, a group or an organization which impedes or restricts (at least temporarily) another party from attaining is desired goals. Although, conflict may impede the attainment of one's goals, the consequences may be beneficial if it produce new information which, in turn, enhances the decision-making, lengthy delays over issues which do not importantly affect the outcome of the project, or a disintegration of the term's efforts (p.257).

As a result, the aim of conflict management will be to put an end to conflict by addressing the root causes of the problem(s) at hand and coming up with fair solutions that all sides can agree on (Edet, Benson & Williamss, 2020). Conflict management strategies refer to internal processes that allow various authorities to address the

fundamental causes of issues in order to settle disputes in a way that is agreeable to the parties involved (Adeyemi & Ademilua, 2018). Conflict management strategies, according to Onyali and Nnebedum (2018), may be characterized as the procedures, controls, or methods used by the principal of a school in an effort to curb conflict's destructive inclinations. Conflict management strategies are those tactics or methods that may be applied to stop, manage, or settle conflicts in educational settings. Any school should prioritize conflict management strategies since they enable the reduction or management of the negative impacts of disputes (Mbah, Oluka & Alio, 2021). Different disputes may necessitate different conflict management strategies, with the decision based on the nature of the conflict or the persons involved. However, two conflict management strategies were of particular interest in this study: accommodating and collaborative conflict management strategies.

The accommodating conflict management strategy conceals one's perceived perspectives while focusing on the other's perceptions of the circumstance (Edo & Omunakwe, 2021). Accommodating requires putting one's personal wants aside in order to please others and maintain the peace. The emphasis is on maintaining the relationship. It is beneficial when one is mistaken or when you wish to reduce losses since it retains relationships (Amie-Ogan & Eziri, 2021). Thote and Gowri (2020) argued that accommodating is a strategy where one party gives in to the wishes or demands of another. They are being cooperative but not assertive. This may appear to be a gracious way to give in when one figure out s/he has been wrong about an argument. It is less helpful when one party accommodates another merely to preserve harmony or to avoid disruption.

On the other hand, collaborating style of conflict management is sometimes called problem-solving or integrating, involves working through conflict differences and solving problems so that everyone wins (Shee, Mwawasi & Kirigia, 2021). It seeks to resolve conflict by placing maximum focus on both groups' concerns. The collaborative strategy views conflict as problems to be solved and finding creative solutions that satisfy all the parties' concerns (Onyedieke, 2019). Collaboration takes time and if the relationship among the parties is not important, then it may not worth the time and energy to create a win-win solution (Amoda, Awe, Ogunade & Yakubu, 2021). It is commonly named as problem-solving style. Furthermore, collaboration fosters respect, trust, and the development of connections (Arop, Owan & Ekpang, 2018). Conflict must be addressed frankly and in a way that displays openness for all parties to acquire what they need in order to create a more collaborative atmosphere. When both sides are concerned, the collaborative technique is used in conflict resolution. It is both aggressive and cooperative, with the purpose of finding a "win/win" solution. These conflict management strategies have been suggested to have an influence on teachers' job effectiveness (Thote & Gowri, 2020).

Job effectiveness is measured based on quality, quantity and time. Teachers' job effectiveness is the ability of teachers to organize their job processes and professionalism in a manner that enables them to perform more work and adequately produce expected results in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities (Eric, 2019). Teachers' job effectiveness as used here refers to the ability of teachers to organize their job processes and professionalism in a manner that enables them to perform more work and adequately produce expected results in terms of classroom teaching, maintenance of classroom discipline and supervision of students' academic activities (Altaf, 2016). However, the extent to which principals' utilization of conflict management strategies has a relationship with teachers' job effectiveness is not clear. This is because it appears like different forms of conflicts occur in secondary schools in Anambra State. These conflict situations seem to have persisted over time in some of these schools and it seems like some public secondary school principals have struggles to adapt the right conflict strategies to mitigate the conflict situation. Cases are abound where teachers and principals engage in heated arguments and also cases of conflicts between teachers and students. These situations may have an effect on teachers job effectiveness in the school. Thus, the need for the study to empirically ascertain principals' conflict management strategies as correlate of teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra state.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Managing conflicts situations within the school environment is part of the role and responsibility of the secondary school principal. The secondary school principal is charged with the task of ensuring that every member of the school community works in synergy towards the achievement of school goals. However, some school principals in public secondary schools appear to have failed in adopting suitable conflict management strategies. This is because of the high rate of conflict situation between students and teachers, teachers and teachers, principal and teachers, teachers and parents among others in some public secondary schools in Anambra State. The researcher wonders if the presence of these conflict situations would not impede on the ability of secondary school teachers to effectively discharge their duties. It is against this backdrop that this study conducted.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the correlation between principals' use of accommodation strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State?
2. What is the correlation between principals' use of collaboration strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

METHOD

The study adopted the correlational research design. The study was carried out in Anambra State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised 263 principals in the six Education Zones of 263 public secondary schools in Anambra State. This study used two instruments. The first instrument is titled “Principals’ Conflict Management Strategies Questionnaire (PCMSQ)”. It was developed by the researcher. It contains 20 items spread in two clusters; A and B. Cluster ‘A’ contains 10 items on accommodating conflict management strategies and Cluster B also contains 10 items on collaborating conflict management strategies. The instrument is structured on a four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The second instrument is titled ‘Teachers’ Job Effectiveness Questionnaire (TJEQ)’. It was developed by the researcher. This instrument measured teachers’ job effectiveness. It contains 20-item statements structured on a four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was validated by three experts in the in the Department of Educational Management and Policy, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The instrument was subjected to a pilot test on 20 principals in Enugu Metropolis who were not part of the population of the study. Test on the instrument using Cronbach Alpha yielded coefficient values of 0.88 for accommodating conflict management strategies, 0.86 for collaborating conflict management strategies and 0.87 for teachers’ effectiveness. The instruments were administered to the respondents by the researchers. Out of 263 copies of questionnaire administered, 246 were returned in good condition. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer research questions. The co-efficient “r” obtained was used to ascertain how each of the independent variables correlates with the dependent variable.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

What is the correlation between principals’ use of accommodation strategy and teachers’ job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 1: Pearson’s Correlation on the correlation between Accommodation Strategy and Teachers Job Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools

Variables	N	Accommodation	Teachers’ Job Effectiveness	Decision
Accommodation	246	1	.820**	Very High Positive correlation
Teachers’ Job Effectiveness	246	.820**	1	

Data in Table 1 reveal that the Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient is $r = .82$. This shows that principals’ use of accommodation strategy to a very high positive

correlation with teachers’ job effectiveness. This implies that when principals use accommodation strategy for handling conflict situation in public secondary schools, teachers’ job effectiveness would improve. Thus, there exist a very high positive correlation between principals’ use of accommodation strategy and teachers’ job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question 2

What is the correlation between principals’ use of collaboration strategy and teachers’ job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 2: Pearson’s Correlation on the Extent Collaboration Strategy Correlates with Teachers Job Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools

Variables	N	Collaboration	Teachers’ Effectiveness	Job Decision
Collaboration	246	1	.854**	Very High Positive correlation
Teachers’ Job Effectiveness	246	.854**	1	

Data in Table 2 reveal that the Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient is $r = .85$. This shows that principals’ use of collaboration strategy to a very high positive correlation with teachers’ job effectiveness. This implies that when principals use collaboration strategy for handling conflict situation in public secondary schools, teachers’ job effectiveness would improve. Thus, there exist a very high positive correlation between principals’ use of collaboration strategy and teachers’ job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State.

DISCUSSION

The finding of the study revealed that there exist a very high positive correlation between principals’ use of accommodation strategy and teachers’ job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. This finding might have resulted because when principals use the accommodation strategy for managing conflicts it tends to bring about a feeling of trust in the principals’ abilities to manage conflict situations among teachers in public secondary in Anambra State. Accommodation strategy would help to improve team spirit among teachers in public secondary schools; this will therefore improve the capacity of teachers to effectively discharge tasks in the school. This is in agreement with Edo and Omunakwe (2021) reported that accommodating strategy predicts teachers’ job performance in secondary school. According to Edo and Omunakwe, the use of accommodating strategy in managing conflict among teachers in secondary schools helps to improve the feeling of belongingness among conflict parties. In the same vein, Mbah, Oluka and Alio (2021) reported that accommodating strategy is an effective conflict management strategy for

handling school conflict situations. Thote and Gowri (2020) stated that accommodating strategy was mostly used by the school principals which positively relate to teachers' job effectiveness. Similarly, Fareo and Jajua (2019) noted that the most effective conflict management strategies used were accommodating and participatory decision strategy. Furthermore Fareo and Jagua suggested that school administrators should continue to demonstrate spirit of tolerance so as to ensure improved job effectiveness.

The finding of the study revealed that there exist a very high positive correlation between principals' use of collaboration strategy and teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State. The findings of the study might have resulted because through the use of collaboration strategy, public secondary school principal can manage conflict situation with both parties being satisfied at the outcome of the conflict management process. Through this conflict management strategy, teachers in the school can work suitably with one another in teams leading to efficiency in the discharge of their teaching tasks. This finding is in agreement with Amoda, Awe, Ogunade and Yakubu (2021) who reported that that collaborating strategy is a significant principals' conflict management strategies adopted for business studies teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools. In the same vein, Shee, Mwawasi and Kirigia (2021) found that there existed a significant and positive correlation between containing conflicts and collaborating strategy. Onyedieke (2019) also reported that collaborative intervention technique is an effective conflict management technique utilized for managing conflict situations in an educational setting. Adeyemi and Ademilua (2018) stated that collaborative conflict management strategies would offer school administrators opportunities to provide a friendly school climate.

CONCLUSION

The researchers conclude based on the findings that conflict management strategies are critical elements in ensuring teachers job effectiveness in public secondary schools. The use of appropriate conflict management strategies in public secondary schools would help to reduce distraction caused by conflict and resulting in public secondary school teachers diligently carrying out their teaching duties. It is therefore pertinent that public secondary school principals take into cognizance the need to utilize conflict management strategies that would consider the views of various conflicting parties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher proffers the following recommendations:

1. Principals in public secondary schools should utilize the accommodating strategy of conflict management when handling conflict situations in their

- school. The use of accommodation strategy would breed trust in the capacity of the principal to handle the conflict situation among the school staff.
2. Principals' of public secondary schools should educate themselves on best practices in the utilization of collaboration strategy in handling conflicts in their schools through reading of books and journals on conflict management.

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